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Committees:

Early Learning &
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Agriculture &
Natural Resources

Appropriations

Appropriations
Subcommittee on Education

Representative
Ruth Kagi

2007
Legislative Report

Dear Neighbors:

A new state Legislature is underway. Our budget picture is the best in many years and there is a refreshing degree of optimism and cooperation in our Capitol. I expect 2007 will be a very good year for our 32nd District priorities.

As you'll see inside, much of my focus this year will be on improving child care and early learning opportunities, children's services, education and the budget. You'll also see highlights of some of my work to improve children's health care, reduce crime, and make our highways safer. I'll cover other issues that are important to local families and businesses in future legislative updates.

I'm happy to report I was recently selected to be the first chairperson of the new Early Learning & Children's Services committee. I've also been appointed to a new budget panel that was created to increase the state's focus on education funding. These new roles will help me to advocate for better support for education, which is a top priority personally and for our district.

As always, I welcome your comments, suggestions and any questions you might have. You can always reach me quickly through the phone numbers and addresses on this page, and I would enjoy hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Rep. Ruth Kagi



Special 32nd District TOWN HALL MEETING

with

**Rep. Ruth Kagi and
Rep. Maralyn Chase**

Saturday March 17
10 a.m. to Noon

Third Place Books
17171 Bothell Way N.E.
Lake Forest Park



Early Learning

Good child care and early learning opportunities can make the difference between a confident child who is ready to succeed in school and a struggling child who starts behind and stays behind. As chair of the new Early Learning & Children's Services committee, my goal is to help make Washington the national leader in early learning and child care.

We're well on our way! In 2006, we created a cabinet-level Department of Early Learning and the Thrive-By-Five partnership – an excellent public-private partnership for early learning that is being watched by the nation. This year, we can build on our strong foundations by:

- Assuring that every parent has access to the best research available on child development – and how to help their child to be ready for school.
- Creating a 5-star quality rating system to provide quick and easy information that helps parents make child care choices. Quality ratings will also help providers improve quality.
- Enrolling 2,000 additional children in Washington's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Pre-School Program, which is similar to Head Start.
- Creating an Early Learning Advisory Council to ensure that the diverse concerns of parents, child-care providers and educators are reflected in our early learning strategies.
- Attracting quality child-care providers by improving funding for child care services.
- Working with the statewide Thrive-By-Five partnership to build local partnerships that support quality early learning opportunities in local communities.

This is an ambitious agenda for one year. But young children don't get to repeat their early years, so it is important that we make progress quickly.

Governor's Budget Puts Education First

One of my most important jobs as your representative is to help make budget choices that reflect our values. Gov. Chris Gregoire has given our budget discussions a good start. Her proposal calls for strong investments in education and other key priorities, yet requires no new taxes and prudently saves \$605 million in reserves. Highlights include:

K-12 Education: The Governor is calling for major investments to reduce class sizes and improve math and science education. Her budget would also greatly expand voluntary all-day kindergarten and provide more tutoring to students who need help to pass the WASL. I'm very pleased with the proposed \$60 million increase in special education funding, which is especially important for schools in our area.

Higher Education: College officials are delighted with the governor's proposed budget, which adds 8,300 new college enrollments and financial aid for far more students. I particularly like the proposal to add \$20 million of state funds to allow a tuition freeze at Shoreline and other community colleges.

Human Services: By focusing on thoughtful investments that earn federal matching funds, the proposed budget does a good job of stretching state dollars to improve foster care, kinship care, developmental disability services, mental health, and care for retirees in nursing homes, boarding homes and adult family homes.

Saving Puget Sound: Proposed funding would clean up broken septic systems and more than 60 toxic-pollution sites, while also restoring essential habitat for salmon, shellfish and other species. I'll also be working to enhance funding for state parks.

211. One Phone Number. Thousands of Uses.

Have you ever wondered how to find a counselor, or a food bank for a friend? 211 is a free and easy-to-remember phone number that connects you to thousands of services. And 211 is now available throughout King and Snohomish County.

When you dial 211, a trained specialist will connect you with exactly the services or answers you need. Disaster assistance. Child Care. Food or shelter. Counseling. Volunteering. You name it. You can get it all through 211.



Health Care for All Children

We've made good progress toward ensuring that every child in Washington has health coverage by 2010, but there is more to do. This year, I'm co-sponsoring a strategy (HB 1071) and supporting funding to cover 32,000 additional Washington children.

Our proposal would also improve the efficiency of children's health funding by combining three publicly-funded programs into one and setting clear benchmarks for improvement in areas such as immunization rates and well-child checkups.

To me, children's health coverage is a critical public policy issue. Kids without coverage are more likely to suffer from preventable illnesses, more likely to fall behind in school, and more likely to see doctors only in emergency rooms. Covering all children is a way to build a healthy and productive society.



Fighting Crime by Investing in Kids

Seattle Police Chief Gil Kerlikowski led a delegation of law enforcement officials to the state capitol to enthusiastically support my Home Visiting bill (HB 1365).

Well-designed home visiting strategies reduce child abuse and help young children to enter school healthy and ready to learn. One such program, the Nurse-Family Partnership, is so effective that it reduces future arrests by an estimated 60 percent and saves taxpayers an average of \$27,000 per family in later social costs! My home visiting bill is needed to increase state investments in research-proven home visiting strategies.

As one county sheriff put it: "If today is like most other days, 18 children in Washington will be bruised, burned, sexually molested, or left alone, hungry, without needed medical treatment or love. The home visiting bill will help prevent those tragedies."



Law enforcement leaders support Rep Kagi's HB 1365. L-R: Snohomish County Sheriff Rick Bart, Seattle Police Chief Gil Kerlikowske, Laura Wells of Fight Crime/Invest in Kids, Rep. Kagi, Rep. Maureen Walsh, and Sumner Police Chief Colleen Wilson.

Saving Lives with Safer Highways

Two women were widowed on Oct. 4th, 2005 when their husbands were killed by logs spilling from a speeding and overloaded logging truck. The driver was high on meth-amphetamines. Both the truck and the company had a history of safety violations.

This tragedy might have been prevented if we had a system for quickly linking licensing and law enforcement decisions with records of collisions, infractions, and failed safety inspections. Last year, I asked the state patrol to work with the trucking industry and others to develop a plan to fix this dangerous loophole. This year, I'm proposing a law based on their findings. The proposal, HB 1304, would:

- Adapt the federal government's highly effective interstate trucking database to track commercial trucking safety within state borders.
- Shut down trucking companies with a pattern of violations until the violations are corrected.
- Take unsafe trucks operating in Washington off the roads.
- Significantly increase penalties for multiple violations.

The State Patrol, Washington Trucking Association and Department of Licensing are convinced these steps will save lives and get bad actors off the road. I'm working on a separate law targeting meth-using commercial drivers. If you had heard the moving testimony for my proposals by the women who were widowed in the logging accident, you'd understand why I feel so strongly about passing these laws this year.



Greg Ball Trail Now Open

This summer, I had the good fortune to hike a beautiful new trail—built primarily by volunteers. I encourage you to visit the new Greg Ball Trail at Wallace Falls State Park. The beautiful 1.9 mile trail to Wallace Lake was created by a fantastic partnership between the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Washington Trails Association (WTA) and youth volunteers. It is a real tribute to the value of volunteers and the public sector working together to improve our public lands.

Volunteer youth donated 20,000 hours to make the trail a reality—the equivalent of a \$253,000 gift to the people of Washington. The new trail is named after the late Greg Ball. As operations director for the WTA, Greg spearheaded the creation of the trail at virtually no cost to Washington taxpayers. It is a fitting legacy for a leader who did so much to improve trails throughout Washington.



Beautiful Wallace Lake.

Photo courtesy of Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

Supporting St. Edward Park

St. Edward Park is a treasured, pristine oasis in our urban landscape. It is named after St. Edward Seminary, which was built in 1934 and sits in the middle of the park. This ornate, beautiful building is falling into disrepair and will soon be beyond saving—unless we act soon.

I have introduced a bill, House Bill 1172, which would require the Parks Department to develop a plan, including cost estimates, of repairs needed to stabilize and repair the seminary. The bill received strong support from Kenmore residents who came to Olympia to testify. I expect it to receive favorable consideration this session.



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